

April 28, 2015

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan are opposed to SB 4. As written, it could allow employees, employers, law enforcement, and more importantly to us and Planned Parenthood patients, health care professionals to refuse to provide services based on their own religious beliefs. This language is broad in scope and the unintended consequence of this type of legislation is unclear.

Michigan currently has the following healthcare protections in place for patients:

- Health facilities must adopt policies describing patient rights and responsibilities. At minimum, the policies must provide: "a patient or resident shall not be denied appropriate care on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual preference, or source of payment."
- Patients are entitled to receive adequate and appropriate care, and "information about his or her medical condition, proposed course of treatment, and prospects for recovery, in terms that the patient can understand."
- An employer cannot exclude coverage of prescription contraceptives from its otherwise comprehensive health plan.

But this bill would add, "except if it goes against the provider's religion." Healthcare patients across the state of Michigan could be treated according to the religious beliefs of an individual in an exam room. This is not right.

Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights as Americans. That is why it is protected in the state and federal constitution. But that freedom does not give any of us the right to harm others. Unlike our current constitutional protections for freedom of religion, this new law could put an individual's religious beliefs ahead of the common good by allowing people to pick and choose which laws they're going to follow.

The language in this bill is broad in scope and the unintended consequence of it could be detrimental to not only LGBT people, but women and their reproductive health, child welfare, public safety, unmarried couples, single mothers, healthcare access, the rule of law itself, and more.

A few examples of how this bill invites discrimination in healthcare:

- A doctor could withhold critical medical information that allows a patient to make an informed medical decision.
- Emergency rooms could refuse to give survivors of rape information on emergency contraception.
- A pharmacist could refuse to fill a prescription for daily birth control pill because of his/her religious beliefs.
- Physicians could refuse to provide IVF to a gay couple.
- A pregnant woman who is miscarrying could be refused lifesaving care at a Catholic hospital.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan urge you to vote "no" on SB 4.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda West". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amanda" and last name "West" clearly distinguishable.

Amanda West

Director of Government Relations